

# Landsbergis Asks Latvians To Join Fight

## *Riga Legislature Expected To Vote for Independence*

By Michael Dobbs  
Washington Post Foreign Service

RIGA, U.S.S.R., May 3—Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis called today for a united front of all three Baltic republics to press for complete independence from the Kremlin and criticized the Bush administration for relaxing restrictions on sales of technology to the Soviet Union.

The Lithuanian leader was speaking on the eve of an expected vote for independence by the legislature of the neighboring Baltic republic of Latvia. It was his first trip outside Lithuania since the Kremlin imposed economic sanctions in an attempt to force the Lithuanian legislature to stop implementing its March 11 declaration of independence.

The opening session of the Latvian legislature suggests that the separatist bandwagon is now rolling in all three Baltic republics, which were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 under secret agreements with Nazi Germany. But the pace and nature of the independence movement differs in each republic—with Lithuania in the lead, and Latvia and Estonia opting for a more cautious approach.

Procedural votes at today's Latvian legislative session indicated that separatist members should have no difficulty mustering the two-thirds majority they need to declare independence. A draft declaration offered by members of the nationalist Latvian Popular Front pledges allegiance to the key articles of the 1922 constitution of independent Latvia but provides for a transitional period before assumption of full sovereignty.

Today, the legislature elected a pro-independence Communist, Anatolijs Gorbunovs, as its chairman, with 153 votes to 43 for other candidates. The leader of an anti-independence group of ethnic Russians known as Interfront, Anatoli Alexeev, drew only 20 votes.

Landsbergis, who presented a symbolic flame of freedom to Gorbunovs, told the deputies that the three Baltic republics are joined together by a single "chain of light." "If

# Landsbergis Appeals for Baltic Unity

BALTIC, From A29

the chain is broken it means that the spiritual existence of all our nations will be endangered," he said.

Latvia is the most ethnically mixed of the Baltic republics, with indigenous Latvians nearly outnumbered by Russians and other Slavic immigrants. Opinion polls indicate, however, that up to 40 percent of the Slavic population supports the goal of Latvian independence.

By including a specific mention of a transitional period in their independence declaration, the Latvians are hoping to avoid a Lithuanian-style Soviet economic embargo and to prevent a backlash by the large Russian minority. Addressing the legislature today, Gorbunovs warned the members that they could expect little help from the West in their dispute with the Kremlin.

"The world is not going to risk what has been achieved in the area of arms control and detente by Mikhail Gorbachev for the sake of 5 million Balts," said Gorbunovs, who has steered a careful course between the demands of the Latvian secessionist movement and his desire to keep lines of communication open with Moscow.

At an impromptu press conference, Landsbergis said the Lithuanian legislature is likely to suspend some of its independence legislation following a French-West German appeal when it resumes work in Vil-



Latvian President Gorbunovs, left, gestures at start of legislature in Riga. Lithuanian President Landsbergis looks on.

nium on Friday. He called for immediate talks with Moscow to establish exactly which laws need to be suspended to pave the way for full-scale negotiations with the Kremlin.

Asked about the Bush administration's decision to relax restrictions on high-technology exports to the Soviet Union, Landsbergis replied, "Gorbachev is maintaining a very hard position against us. Perhaps these steps on the part of the United States are allowing him to maintain this rigid position."

Outside the legislature in Riga's cobbled old town, hundreds of Latvians and Russians staged demonstrations and counter-demonstrations while listening to live broadcasts of the independence debate. A

group of 20 Soviet army officers in uniform waved banners reading, "We Are Prepared to Defend the Soviet Union" and "No to Separatism." The officers were jeered by the predominantly separatist crowd, which chanted, "Soviet occupiers, go home."

## Armenia Votes Suspension Of Spring Military Draft

Reuter

MOSCOW—The legislature of Soviet Armenia voted today to follow the example of rebel Lithuania and suspend the spring draft of young men into the Soviet armed forces until "their safety can be

guaranteed," Moscow Radio's Interfax news service reported.

Young Armenians, like their fellow recruits from the Baltic republics, complain of discrimination and intimidation while serving in the Soviet army.

An official of the Armenian Independence Movement said mistreatment of Armenian servicemen had grown recently, with reports of about 40 killed while on military duty over the past two years. However, the official said he thought it unlikely that the local military commissariat would heed the legislature's decision.

A minimum of two years' military service is compulsory for all young Soviet men.